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MEINERT, Carmen (ed.): *Traces of Humanism in China: Tradition and Modernity*. New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2010. 210 pp., ISBN 978-3-8376-1351-3.

This is a volume in the series "Being Human: Caught in the Web of Cultures – Humanism in the Age of Globalization," the ideological orientation of which is revealed in the volume's Foreword by intellectual historian Jörn Rüsen:

> This book can be read as an impulse for the beginning of an intercultural humanism. […] It shows that humanism is not a privilege of one tradition but a promise and a desire in all forms of cultural life, within which man has to realize his or her humanity (p.8).

In her Introduction to the volume Carmen Meinert sees evidence of "Chinese humanism" in "the focus of Chinese philosophy throughout the ages […] on man and society to such an extent that discussions on ethical and political concerns have often been at the expense of the development of metaphysics." However, she immediately qualifies this claim, stating that this kind of humanism or *rendao* [way of man] cannot be thought of "as separate from a supreme power or nature" as evidenced in such formulations as *tian ren he yi* [integration of heaven and man].) The aim of the volume, she explains, is to give "a glimpse of some of the humanist traces found in this *Chinese humanism*." Not surprisingly, nearly all of six substantive chapters focus on aspects of Confucian thought and tradition, especially the concept of *ren* (humaneness; benevolence; sensitive concern) (p. 11).

Achim Mittag's Introduction to historian Weizheng Zhu's opening chapter, "Confucian Statecraft in Early Imperial China," explains that this chapter is based on the first chapter of Zhu's (still?) forthcoming book publication *The Chinese Tradition of Humanism* (*Zhongguo de renwen chuantong*). I must confess to being quite baffled as to why this chapter was included in the volume. Nowhere does it address the theme of humanism. Rather it is little other than a disparate assembly of notes and reflections on Western Han rulers and philosophers.

Paul D'Ambrosio's "Footprints in the Water: Assessment in *Zhuangzi*" is the only chapter in the volume that deals with the Daoist thought, focusing on the *shi / fei* distinction in *Zhuangzi*, which the author renders as "assessment". Much of the discussion is, however, focused on the concept of *ren*. The first part of the chapter rehearses aspects of Confucius's understanding of *ren*, in order to provide a contrast with its critical treatment in *Zhuangzi*, dealt with in the second

half of the chapter. The author concludes: "if there were any 'humaneness' in the *Zhuangzi* it would be humaneness without humaneness, or that *ren* in *Zhuangzi* is precisely the absence of any Confucian conception of *ren*" (p. 66).

In his "Reconsidering *Ren* as a Basic Concept of Chinese Humanism" Achim Mittag begins with the premise that the study of Chinese humanism has to begin with the concept of *ren*. To this end, he sets out to show that in Song Confucianism *ren* often meant more than "humaneness", suggesting that the concept could be more appropriately rendered as "a keen sense of responsibility in one's action", "conscientiousness", and even "benevolent government". Focusing on the views of Wang Anshi and Sima Guang, Mittag argues that from the eleventh century *ren* lost its privileged position in moral ethics and took on a pronounced role in Song and post-Song political ethics, only to recede once again into the citadel of moral philosophy under the influence of Zhu Xi. How this relates to humananism, and how Mittag understands humanism, is not made explicit.

In "Negotiations of Humaneness and Body Politics in Historical Contexts" Angelika C. Messner sets herself the ambitious task of showing how the abstract concept of *ren* was "mapped onto and into the body" in sixteenth and seventeenth century-China. Messner points out that this was a period of great change – political, demographic, and economic – but it is not clear why a period of change *per se* is relevant to the topic or indeed why the topic of "body-mapping" was chosen. As an outgrowth of Neo-Confucian self-cultivation, it is proposed, the practice of medicine had become "an integral part of the Neo-Confucian scholarly agenda" by the fourteenth century and by the late Ming, as scholars turned to the medical field, *ren* "came to play a crucial role in identity-shaping processes on the part of scholars who turn to work as physicians in the 17th century" (p.99). Some actual examples would have helped to elucidate and substantiate this latter claim. This is an oddly truncated chapter – several attempts are made to provide some longer-term intellectual-historical background, but the main thesis is left undeveloped. There are too many broad brushstrokes; and the range of territory the author has attempted to cover is overly ambitious. It is difficult not to form the view that this chapter is a selection of materials taken from a fuller study.

In "Human Equality in Modern Chinese Political Thought" Dennis Schilling first advances the notion of what he terms the Confucian "naturalistic view" of society: the idea that the human way (*rendao*) mirrors the way of heaven (*tiandao*) and that social distinctions are a manifestation of natural inequality. This in turn is reflected in the justification of social hierarchies and the belief

that humans are naturally unequal. The chapter then briefly examines a challenge to the naturalistic view – Huang Zongxi's (1610–1695) argument that natural authority and social authority differ; and that social authority should be equally shared by a ruling class of moral excellence – before turning to a more detailed discussion of two late-Qing views on equality, both of which invoke the Sinitic Buddhist term, *pingdeng*, to express the notion of equality. (The Sinitic term – as is typical of so many Buddhist technical terms – actually renders a diverse range of Sanskrit terms.) In its late-nineteenth century non-Buddhist application, we are told, "*pingdeng* denotes equality in social status and social authority, human natural equality, as well as equal distribution of land and wealth, peace and security" (p. 115). According to Schilling, for Kang Youwei (1858–1927), *pingdeng* is best understood to mean "adequacy": "social norms as a whole should adequately reflect the natural conditions of man: natural individuality requires social autonomy, human equality requires political participation" (p. 120). For Tan Sitong (1865–1898), we are told, *pingdeng* transcends individual identity to produce a collective identity. Curiously, in his discussion of the related concept of *tong* – which he translates as "communication" rather than "interpenetration" – Schilling seems oblivious to the concept's connection with Huayan Buddhist thought, in which the boundary between the absolute (*li*) and phenomena (*shi*) is posited as non-existent. Schilling maintains that because the principles of physics (read *tian*) are not different from the principles of society (read *ren*), Tan actually re-affirms the naturalistic view. Extension of the discussion of *pingdeng* to include the views of Zhang Binglin would have consolidated this last part of the chapter and provided a clearer pathway into modern political thought. On this topic, see Viren Murthy: "Equality as Reification: Zhang Taiyan's Yogācāra Reading of *Zhuangzi* in the Context of Global Modernity." In: John Makeham (ed.): *Transforming Consciousness: The Intellectual Reception of Yogācāra Thought in Modern China*, forthcoming.

In the last chapter of the volume, "Inventing Humanism in Modern China", Ke Zhang examines the divergent interpretations and various translations of "humanism" in twentieth-century China. Specifically, Zhang identifies four stages in the invention or narrative interpretation of humanism (*renwen zhuyi*; *rendao zhuyi*) in modern China: the May Fourth Movement in which humanism (*rendao zhuyi*) became a weapon to criticize traditional culture and values; the debate over science vs. metaphyics, as well as the Xueheng School's advocation of *renwen zhuyi* in the 1920s; New Confucianism, particularly from the 1950s; and the discussion of "humanistic spirit" (*renwen jingshen*) in the 1990s. Zhang

concludes that there has never been a fixed meaning of "humanism" in modern Chinese texts.

As is typical of many edited volumes, the whole is something less than the sum of its parts. The retrospective interrogation of various periods and events in Chinese history through the interpretative lens of the elusive and opaque concept "humanism" – over which the concept's European origins continue to cast a shadow, despite the claims made in the volume's Foreword (and cited above) – is a curious experiment, but one that left me wondering just what value and meaning should be attached to the traces that the editor believes have been revealed in the volume.

John Makeham

JÜLCH, Thomas: *Der Orden des Sima Chengzhen und des Wang Ziqiao. Untersuchungen zur Geschichte des Shangqing-Daoismus in den Tiantai-Bergen.* München: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2011 (Sprach und Literaturwissenschaften Band 39). 154 pp., ISBN 978-3-8316-4083-6.

This book, written in German, presents annotated translations of two Chinese texts from the 8th and 9th centuries CE, which relate to the history of Daoism in the Tiantai Mountains in Zhejiang: the *Shangqing shidi chen Tongbo Zhenren zhen tuzan* 上清侍帝晨桐柏真人真圖讚 (Veritable Illustrations with Eulogies of the Imperial Chamberlain of Shangqing and Zhenren of [Mount] Tongbo[1]), DZ 621, by Sima Chengzhen 司馬承禎 (647–735) and the *Tiantaishan ji* 天台山記 (Record of Mount Tiantai) by Xu Lingfu 徐靈府 (827–876[2]). In addition, a short chapter summarizes the most important texts contained in the *Tiantai shan zhi* 天台山志 (Monograph on Mount Tiantai, DZ 603), a compilation dated to 1367 (ROBSON, 2002: 25) or 1368 (ALLISTONE, 2004: 913) (not 1637 as stated on p. 89 in a rather unfortunate typing error), which also contains materials on the history of Daoism in the Tiantai Mountains.

The author explains in a short preface that the two translations were originally two separate essays, which were compiled together with materials on the third text in this book. In fact, rather than creating a coherent narrative, the book presents its textual sources separately. Each text is preceded by a short introduc-

1 The English translation of the title follows VERELLEN, 2004: 424.

2 Date provided by BUJARD, 2000: 145.